



Partnership Parenting

Good for the Community...

When families thrive, the community grows and prospers. Strong families are essential to developing resourceful and safe communities. Connecting families with resources within their communities, builds relationships and connections that support the child and family's long term well being.

Partnership Parents are an important community resource. Traditionally called foster parents, partnership parents share parenting responsibilities with birth parents while children are in foster care. Birth and partnership parents work together to support, love, encourage, guide and nurture children.

Better for Families...

Foster care is a very complex system that involves the needs and interests of many families. Its purpose is to protect children and strengthen families as they make the changes necessary to keep children safe and well.

Even when the best services are provided, foster care placement can be a difficult time for families; shattering the parent's confidence to overcome the problems that caused the child's removal and causing children to lose their sense of self and belonging.

The relationship and communication between the birth and partnership parents can significantly impact the experience that the child and birth family have in foster care.

While working on the problems that led to foster care placement, parents still need to parent. Family is forever, foster care is temporary.

There are many opportunities for birth parents to share parenting responsibilities. Continued parenting through the foster care placement preserves the bond between parent and child and lessens some of the grief children experience from separation. Some examples of shared parenting include a call before bedtime, helping with homework, signing forms or attending an extracurricular activity.

When Parenting is Shared

Placement in foster care often means multiple losses for children at a time when the removal itself is overwhelming. When parenting is shared, children are able to stay connected with their birth families through letters, phone calls, and face to face contacts. The benefits of shared parenting include:

- The establishment of trusting and enduring relationships between birth and foster parents
- The bond between children and their families is preserved
- Families have opportunities to practice new or enhanced parenting skills

Best for Children...

From the child's perspective, partnership parenting provides:

- Opportunities to preserve a sense of identity and history
- Sustained bonding and attachment to the family of origin
- Enhanced self esteem
- Potential for increased contact with birth family
- Two families to love and be loved by
- Smoother transitions; decreased crises and conflicts
- Visitations which are more easily executed and supported
- Consistent messages from birth and foster parents
- Opportunities to see birth parents supported in a non-judgmental way
- Reduced feelings of divided loyalties to two families
- Opportunities to see birth parents supported in making appropriate decisions
- Increased possibility that the partnership family relationship is maintained, even after placement




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Working Together

Birth and Partnership Parents will meet as soon as possible after placement to develop a *Partnership Parenting Plan*. The plan will answer key questions about the child's care and well being, including:

- How will regular communication be maintained?
 - What are the needs, wants routines, likes and dislikes of the child?
 - How can the families work together?
 - Are there appointments, functions or activities that the parents can attend together?
 - Are there hair care, clothing, religion and other personal preferences that should be addressed?
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Parenting Opportunities



Goodnight wisher

Cheerleader

Homework Helper

Appointment Keeper

Planned Communication

Any favorable time, occasion, situation or condition which allows a parent to teach, support, nurture, discipline, care for or guide children is a parenting opportunity. Placement in foster care should not mean that parenting roles are cancelled. You don't have to live with a child to parent.

Parenting opportunities are a vital part of partnership parenting. The opportunities will occur naturally in the course of meeting the needs of children. While the opportunities for shared parenting occur naturally, the opportunities rely on inclusion. Partnership and birth parents are encouraged to creatively seek ways to share parenting roles and responsibilities.

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caring
for children
together

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